

1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930

OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

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An Orokaiva Youth wearing
Head-dress and Hoso

[Frontispiece]

PERSONAL ENHANCEMENT

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[53] designs in red, brown, and black is not unbecoming. A good specimen may be regarded much as a party frock, and a woman is fully conscious of being well dressed when she wears it. It is amusing to see an old dame in expectation of a visit dart into her house and reappear in her best piece of bark-cloth. Growing older the garment grows softer and dirtier and loses all claim to beauty.

Among the Bush and Salt-Water People the woman's *bo* is worn from puberty onwards; among the River People only from marriage onwards. Nowadays a new sense of modesty in the presence of white men has altered this, but one may still occasionally see fully-developed young women among the Aiga or Binandele who go quite naked and without any trace of shame. The assumption of the *bo* by girls as well as boys will be referred to in a later chapter. A few examples of patterned bark-cloth are shown in the accompanying illustration. The method of beating the cloth and painting it are described under 'Arts of Life' (pp. 77-8).

[76.5] The palm-leaf petticoat, commonly known by the Motuan name *rami*, is found as a sign of mourning among the Dirou tribe and on the lower Opi (see p. 222 n.). It is also reported at Lake Koena without any suggestion that it is restricted to mourning;¹ and further as worn by the Yema at Bovera on the Eia, where the older women use it as the proper dress of their people, while the younger have adopted the bark-cloth skirt of their Binandele neighbours.²

292 The Bark-cloth Hat, *Pobu*. The heads of old men are sometimes covered with a small sheet of bark-cloth called *pobu*. It encloses the mass of their hair, and falls over the back. Usually ragged and greasy, the *pobu* is no ornament but yet a mark of age and importance. No young man is seen wearing this unsightly rag. He would be at once too vain of his appearance and too modest to assume a headgear that is the prerogative of age.

292 The Widow's Cowl. Upon her emergence from seclusion the widow wears a cowl-shaped headgear, also called *pobu*.
589 This, as she hangs her head, conceals her whole face and

¹ Beaver, *Annual Report*, 1914-15, p. 14.

² F. R. Cawley, *Annual Report*, 1922-3, p. 25.

292 covers the curious shame which she feels on this occasion.
 589 It is made of bark-cloth or of string netting, and is embroidered, sometimes completely covered, with the seeds
 [531] known as Job's Tears. Being made and decorated with great care, however, it is later worn rather as an ornament under which the widow's charms suffer no concealment.

292 *The Widow's Vest, Baja.* This is usually a straight sleeveless shirt of knitted string completely covered with Job's
 589 Tears (*Coix lacrimae*). It reaches usually to the waist but
 531 sometimes as low as to the knees. *Coix lacrimae* seeds are of two kinds, the one a delicate grey, the other fawn, and with the introduction of black and sometimes red seeds the garment may be very effectively decorated.

291 *The Bark-cloth Mantle.* This is merely a broad sheet, three feet square or more, which is wrapped round the shoulders in cold weather. It is also used very prettily by girls in the dance. Holding it by two corners, the dancer swings it to
 [535] and fro as she moves or allows it to float out behind her head. The bark-cloth is gaily painted and the girl's movements are light and graceful, so that in this guise she is not ineptly called *boriri*, 'the butterfly'.

292 *Bi-kaio, the Apron.* This is a small square of knitted string which hangs from the belt in front of the body. It is worn only by old men of distinction, and is seldom seen even on them. It may be only a partly assimilated introduction from the hill neighbours (Biagi, &c.), among whom it is certainly found more commonly. In the only example which I saw
 [177] the string was knitted in patterns of red, brown, black, and
 [531] white, and the fabric was decorated with black seeds and tufts of cuscus fur. W. N. Beaver mentions the *bi-kaio* in his list of *otobu*.¹

Hair-dressing

302 The Orokaiva commonly allows his hair to grow long, and with the frequent application of coco-nut oil the close ringlets become clogged in a series of tags. The typical *coiffure* is therefore a mass of tails about the thickness of a

¹ 'Notes on Homicidal Emblems among the Orokaiva', &c., *Annual Report*, 1918-19, p. 97; under *Ve Hejo*.

PERSONAL ENHANCEMENT

Feather Head-dresses

- 292 It cannot be denied that when the Orokaiva is in 'full
301 dress' the *tout ensemble* is strikingly fine. We cannot claim
that he has shown a great aptitude for the decorative arts
in general, but he has shown no small amount of artistry in
the decoration of his own person. The most imposing
feature of his make-up is the head-dress of feathers. It is
seldom worn complete save in the dance; in the warlike
expedition (which I have never seen) it was no doubt con-
siderably reduced.

292 The head-dress is built on piecemeal. The individual
301 feathers are fixed in sets on arc-shaped frames, and one after
another these sets are bound upon the mass of hair which is
gathered behind the head. The following is a description of
a dancer's head-dress which may be taken as fairly typical.
237 (1) The lowest stratum was a mass of the black hair-like
feathers of the cassowary which fell back over his shoulders
like a great mane. (2) Above this came a number of sets of
the large white tail-feathers of the hornbill; (3) a set of
hawk's feathers, dapple grey; (4) three or four sweeping
plumes of the red-brown bird of paradise; (5) and lastly,
several tiers of close-set feathers obtained from the smaller
and more brilliant birds such as parrots, &c.

As I have named the various parts of the head-dress from
back to front, the first may be pictured as falling over the
back and shoulders, the last, viz. the tiers of parrot feathers,
as rising above the forehead. The whole is well set off by
a band of shells and dogs' teeth encircling the brow.

Ornaments

- 301 The ornaments, or *hambo*, of the Orokaiva are by no
321 means without a certain richness and beauty. They are
made for the most part with boars' tusks, dogs' teeth, and
various kinds of shell, which components are set together
in some half-dozen bold patterns or styles. The mellow
colours of old ivory, the white and rose of shell, and the
vivid points of scarlet seed find an admirable foil in the
native's brown skin. The *hambo*, it is true, are often dirty
301 enough to blind the fastidious to their artistic worth; but



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(a) Formal appearance of the Initiates



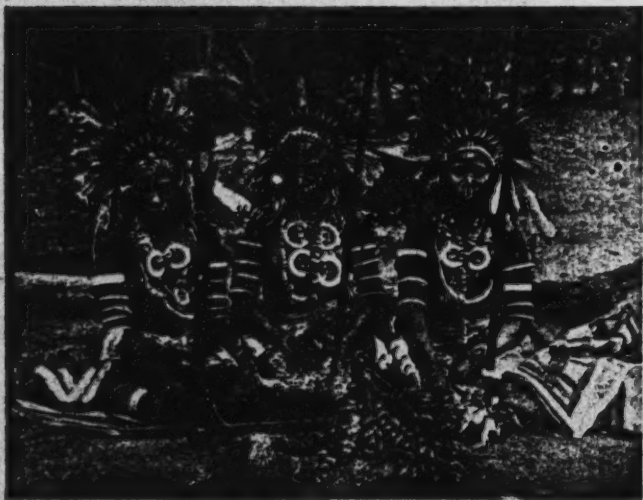
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(b) Initiates wearing *Katambori* feathers



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(a) Eating the *Sana*



(b) Girls newly emerged from Puberty Seclusion

PLATE XXVI [Facing p. 194]

INITIATION CEREMONIES

881 girls who ended their seclusion together go down on foot to the river. Here they were washed by a number of older women, who engaged in a boisterous water-fight, and then all returned in a body dancing and singing extremely indecent songs.

After this bath at day-break the remainder of the morning is given to decorating the girl. Her skin is oiled again, the hair is shaved back a little from her forehead (merely for effect, I believe), and she is bedecked with feathers and ornaments.

The actual début of the girl, or in many cases of the girls, is made with some little dramatic effect. They have been brought together in one house, before which is set up a screen of palm-leaves with an opening or gateway concealed behind curtains of bark-cloth. When all is in readiness, the curtains are drawn apart and reveal the girls standing abreast, with a young man on either flank, apparently as escort. The girls are armed with spears or pineapple clubs; and in one hand they may carry a bunch of ripe betel-nuts, or a new-painted *bo*, rolled up, which will presently serve as a dancer's shawl. The striking feature of their make-up is the *bo* or bark-cloth skirt which they are actually wearing. This is of plain bark-cloth, unornamented save for splashes or smears of red; and in front and rear it has a hole which purports to expose their genitalia to the view of the onlookers. Thus attired the young women move slowly and in silence across the village and sit in a row on a log which their escorts have procured for them. After remaining some ten minutes on the log they rise and seat themselves on a coco-nut mat (*tere*) spread on the ground; and then after another ten minutes or so they rise once more and mingle with their friends. They will subsequently join in the dance which has been organized for the occasion, and they will not discard their ornaments till sunset. The ceremony has not ended until they eat the purificatory stew called *suna*, and steam their bodies over it.

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I have never succeeded in obtaining any satisfactory explanation for the details of this procedure, i.e. the weapons, the betel-nuts, &c. The perforation of the *bo* is to the native

CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

217

general distribution. At any rate they illustrate only one of the theories as to the transformation of human beings into *sovai*. It is after this disagreeable rite has been performed that the widow moves from the grave shelter to the house, or in former times, we may assume, from the ground under the house to the living room above. 765
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It is the general rule for the widow to be secluded in the house of her husband, though in some instances it appears that the house in which the deceased lived is tabu, being avoided on account of fear. But such cases are evidently exceptional. In the event of evacuation it was not the custom to destroy the house but to leave it, probably surrounded by a tabu string. A house is left when it is thought to be 'haunted' by a *sovai*, and it is not only in a house of recent death that this supposed situation can arise. I have known a young married pair abandon a house because their baby was continually ailing, a fact which they attributed to the presence of a *sovai*. Similarly a whole village may be deserted if its inhabitants get the idea into their heads that it is haunted by malignant spirits. 765
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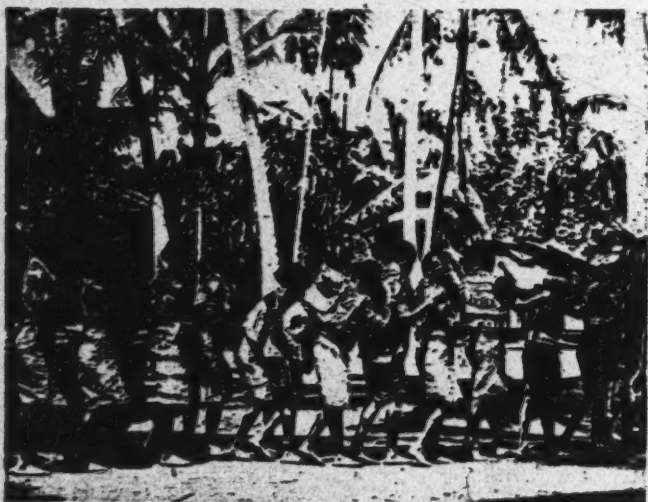
It is only upon the widow, not upon the other women-folk of the deceased, that rigid seclusion is enforced; though a mother will voluntarily remain for a long time at the grave of her child. In some tribes the widower undergoes seclusion. This is so, I understand, in the Wasida, Sangara, Sauaha, Yega, and Tain-Daware tribes. Among the Aiga and the Binandele he is not secluded. Of the other tribes I have no reliable information. 765

During seclusion the widow (or the widower) is engaged in making the mourning jacket *baja*—so called because it is made of *baja* (*coix lacrimae* seeds, or Job's Tears). She has no other work to do. She receives frequent friendly visits from the women of the village, who make her presents of food and assist her to make the *baja*, for which the seeds are gathered by her son or some relative of the deceased. She is not seen by the villagers, and her voice is supposed to remain unheard. Indeed, while living for some months in a village rest-house I was completely unaware that a widow was secluded in the house opposite, and that [292] ●
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(a) First stage of the *Gorokari* or Emergence of the Widow from Seclusion



(b) Second stage of the *Gorokari*

PLATE XXIX
[facing p 218]

CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

765 secluded in the neighbourhood may come out simultaneously. They are brought together in one house which is surrounded by a barricade of palm leaves. Here they are attended by a number of women and girls who spend the morning in decorating themselves behind the concealment of the barrier. Four men, who are to assist in the ceremony, also array themselves in full dancing-dress. Soon after midday, when the waiting spectators have already been entertained with a small feast, a few palm leaves are suddenly wrenched away, and in the gap there appear two of the men squatting on their heels and tapping their drums. Behind them is a long single file of kneeling women with two more men bringing up the rear. They all advance slowly, the women on their knees, the men shuffling on the soles of their feet. The *doru*, who wear their jackets of *baja*, are placed in the centre of the line. They cling to one another, or to the women in front of them, and are in turn supported by the women behind them. They wear a voluminous hood or cowl (*pobu*) of bark-cloth embroidered with Job's Tears, and they hang their heads so that their faces are invisible. Having crawled forward in this manner for some twelve or fifteen yards they all rise to their feet, and, without increasing their pace, proceed to follow a semicircular course through the village. Then the four men withdraw, and the women sit down in a group on some palm leaves which have been laid ready. In their midst are the *doru*, their heads hung low, and their faces completely veiled with the *pobu* cowls.

• [292] The whole ceremony is somewhat melancholy. The line moves very slowly, the *doru* dragging their feet and leaning heavily for support on the women in front of them. The spectators are seated in a wide half-moon, tapping drums very softly, and now and then intoning a solemn low-pitched 'O——, O——!' But this solemn performance may be succeeded by a dance, which of course gives a new complexion to the scene. On one such occasion which I witnessed, the dancers made their appearance somewhat prematurely, breaking cover at the edge of the village with an inspiring thunder of drums. One of the principals rushed forward dramatically waving them back, but, disregarding

CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

221

him, the dance swept into the village, while the solemn *gorukari* procession went steadily on. In this case the *doru* were helped on to a house verandah, and the younger girls in the procession turned hastily to join in the more animated and attractive entertainment of the dance. Throughout the rest of the day, which witnessed a dance, a dramatic performance, and a feast, the *doru* (of whom there were three) sat on the house verandah without as much as raising their heads to see what was going on.

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After this ceremonial emergence the seclusion of the *doru* is over. She continues to wear the *baja*, but may come and go at her ordinary work. She is free to marry again, and marriage may take place before the later ceremony in which the *baja* is discarded. It is said that the halting gait of the widow and her clinging for support upon her neighbour are due to the weakness of her legs after long seclusion; though if we feel inclined to accept such an explanation it must be merely symbolic. The gradual assumption of an upright gait, however, marks in some manner the caution which the native regards as essential in all transition stages. The hiding of the *doru's* face is again attributed to the *meb*, or shame, which was said to be the reason of seclusion in general.

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I was assured that among the southern tribes, who practise seclusion of the widower, there was no ceremonial emergence: the widower's legs were supposed to stand the strain of inactivity and he walked out of his seclusion unassisted. But this cannot be altogether correct, for Mr. Wurth has described, in reference to the Eroro district, a solemn procession in single file, each individual resting his hands on the shoulders of the person in front of him, and the widower wearing the mourning jacket of Job's Tears—in fact a ceremonial that corresponds in all essentials to the emergence of the widow.

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Signs and Observances of Mourning

The widow continues to wear her jacket of *baja* (vide 765 p. 217), and among the coastal people she smears her face and limbs with mud, which dries white and gives her a sufficiently ghastly appearance. (I have not noted in detail

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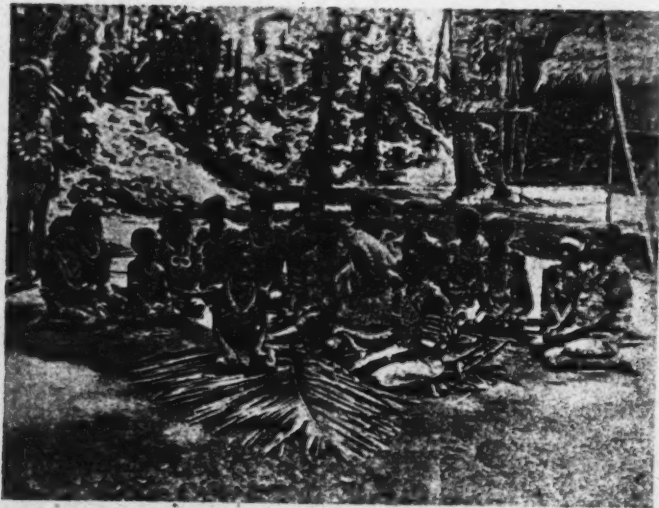
CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

765 222 the distribution of this latter custom, but it is not practised
 292 among the Aiga or the Binandele.) The *baja* jacket is worn
 [302] also by the widower, and various relatives of the deceased
 bear Job's Tears about their persons as a sign of mourning,
 [301] sometimes in the form of jackets, sometimes merely as
 armlets or neck ornaments. The seeds appear to be of two
 varieties, pale grey or fawn, and with the addition of red
 and black seeds the *baja* jacket may be very effectively
 decorated. Except in the case of the widow, it appears that
 the *baja* may be put off at will: a man will wear it when he
 'walks about', and doff it when he works. It is, in fact,
 rather in the nature of an ornament than of sack-cloth and
 ashes. However, I have been informed—quite gratuitously
 —that the *asisi* of the dead is in some manner immanent in
 the *baja*.

The hood (*pohu*) is either of bark-cloth or of netted string,
 in either case thickly embroidered with the seeds. A fish-net
 may be used for the purpose, or the *betawa*, i.e. string bag,
 which belonged to the dead man, and which now figures
 as a memento.¹

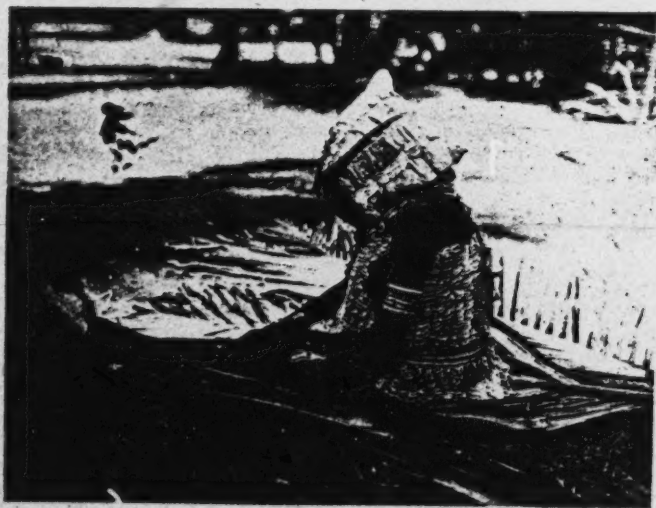
765 There are many minor indications of mourning. A
 301 woman will wear mementoes of her husband such as a thick
 necklet made from his *bo* rolled as if into a rope and covered
 with *baja*, or a series of pendants—a fragment of the pot
 in which his food was cooked, a chip of the tree he chopped,
 his coco-nut spoon, his leglet, a tuft of his hair; and a
 widower may wear his late wife's taro peeler or her bodkin
 of flying-fox bone. A recognized symbol of mourning is a
 necklet of large white beads formed of cooked taro which
 has hardened. A man will wear a beard and cut his hair
 765 short in mourning. Both these practices are in the nature of
 302 self-castigation, for the Orokaiva fancy a glabrous beauty,
 and if a man have long head-hair it is felt to be a glory.
 In one case (to which I have previously drawn attention)

¹ An interesting mark of mourning is the *rasi* or skirt of palm leaf. This is by no means universal, but is found in the Dirou tribe (where it is of coco-nut), and among the people of the lower Opi (where it is of pandanus). In regard to the latter people, it is said that the women of an earlier population, associated with a semi-mythical character, Bubugare, all wore palm-leaf skirts; but that they dispersed, some to the north and some to the south, so that nowadays these skirts are to be seen on the one hand on the river Waris and on the other about Cape Nelson.



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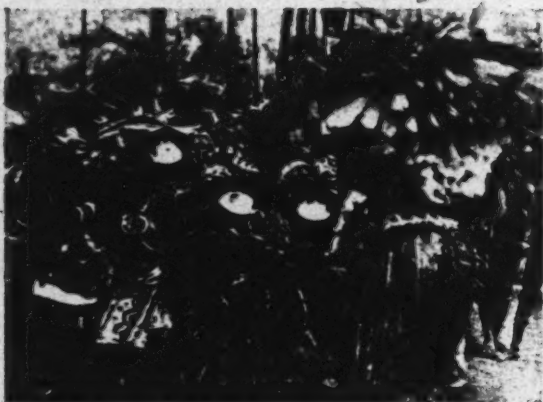
(a) The Widow sitting among her attendants



(b) The Widow, showing *Baja* jacket and *Pohn*

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OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23



535
292

(a) Dancers in the *Si* Dance



(b) Scene in a village during a Dance



(c) Performers of Dance *Arijo*

PLATE XXXI Facing p.234]

DANCE AND DRAMA

535 they run forward a few paces and halt, and as they halt the two leaders rise, turn, and beat their drums over the heads of the pair behind them. The action, which is repeated again and again, is suggestive enough of the large-headed tadpole making short darts through the water.

535 The costume of the dancer requires some description. The first of the major dances, *kuru*, does not call for any 292 special decoration, but in all the others the performers appear in what may be called full costume, viz. feather head-dress, face-paint, ornaments held in the teeth, and *ando*, i.e. voluminous skirts or mantles of grass or palm leaf, frayed and dyed. It is unnecessary to dwell on the effectiveness of the *ensemble*. Bunches of croton add to the already brilliant colouring, and the dancer, with his massive head-dress and sweeping draperies, seems to be magnified far beyond human size.

It is worthy of note, however, that the costume constitutes a virtual disguise, which is in some cases made more complete by a veil of shredded palm leaf which hangs from the forehead. This disguise derives extra significance from the fact that there is at least an affectation of secrecy as to the identity of the dancers. At the formal rehearsal before the women, called *Pamoni kiari*, the parts are deliberately 'faked': the various positions are not taken by the men who are to take them in the final appearance on the following day. Again, prior to a dance which I witnessed, the names and positions of the personnel were told over to me, but in a whisper, and only within the confines of the *java bamboru*. The native reason for this secrecy was that the effect upon the women and the guests would be spoilt by divulging the names of the performers.

There is one particular in the costumes to which I would draw attention. In some of the dances—I have not carefully noted which—certain of the performers wear a conical head-dress of croton leaves. It is usually the leading pair (*boboru*), and perhaps also the last pair (*abo*), who appear in this uncommon headgear. Now at Bovera on the river Eia, which is practically the northern boundary of the Orokaiva, I have seen in a man's house several conical head-dresses strongly

DANCE AND DRAMA

239

made of cane and bark-cloth, which were virtually masks; and Mr. C. H. Karius informs me that he has seen on the river Waria what we should definitely call masked dancers, whose mask was once more of the same conical shape.

These particulars—the secrecy, the virtual disguise, also perhaps the use of palm-leaf skirts and mantles, and certainly the conical head-gear—all remind one of the masked dances of the Western Papuan, and in particular of the typical conical mask of the 'kaiva kuka'. I would, therefore, put forward the very tentative suggestion that in the ceremonial dances of the Orokaiva we have a faint replica of the masked dance of the west. If this were so we should have a fair case for viewing the dance as a mortuary ceremony in which the dancers originally represented the spirits of the dead. For the present, however, this may be laid aside as no more than a conjecture.

The Drama: Stage Accessories

We may now turn our attention to the drama which always appears as a well-defined episode, and thus admits of separate treatment. I have used the word 'drama', despite its pretentious sound, because it is really the most non-committal; though 'mime' or 'farce' might have been more descriptive. As dialogue is almost completely absent, the expression 'dumb-show' would have been perhaps the most accurate of all. It is very difficult to discover a native word for the drama as abstracted from the remainder of the performance, i.e. the dance. The most satisfactory is *sesena* (Binandele *tetenya*) which means simply 'play', or 'play about'. Sometimes it is called *sonai-sesena*, 'the game played by the *sonai*'. Another word, of which I do not know the literal meaning, is *tebua*; and yet another—*yavutu*. It will be remembered that the play is proceeded or ushered in by the ballet. When the dance has been in progress for some ten minutes or more, the dancers suddenly leave in a body, retire into the bush near by, and reappear bearing the movable stage properties. These naturally vary according to the subject of the drama: they may, e.g., consist of a garden platform on which one of the actors is to sit, or a sago-log

DANCE AND DRAMA

251

formed at Petakiari on the Opi, actually came from a plantation near Samarai in the Eastern Division, where the story was told one night in the labourers' sleeping quarters. 536

If there are no playwrights there are, nevertheless, those whom we might call actors. Certain men become celebrated for a gift of buffoonery. They are called *ate-buso*, i.e. expert in *ate*, or the art of demonstration, or *sovai-buso*, i.e. expert in representing the *sovai*. Such men are much in request, and I have been surprised to note—though this may not be invariable—that the man who takes the *samuna's* part, viz. that of the *binei* or *sovai*, is usually one of years, character, and some importance. It is not a part for the village idiot. The *buwivi*, who play prettier but less important parts, are usually young men of good appearance. There are no actresses on the Orokaiva stage: all female parts, whether of *samuna* or *buwivi*, are played by men.

The acting consists almost invariably of dumb show; and dialogue, where it does occur, is no more than elementary. In only one of the dramas I saw myself did any of the actors open his mouth to utter more than an inarticulate cry; though it is true that in this instance (No. 7, p. 249) the two *samuna*, husband and wife, kept the audience amused by shouted interchanges. As a rule, however, the *samuna* relies on exaggerated gestures and silent caricature.

The conventional costume of the *samuna* is made of 536
pipiga, an extremely rough and ragged kind of bark-cloth, 292
and it covers him like a hooded cloak. By immersion in swamp mud it is dyed to an evil grey-black, and where it leaves his limbs exposed the actor may apply charcoal. Over his eyes he wears a pair of half coco-nut shells, like huge goggles, which are pierced so that he may see through them. These great eyes are called *kiti monjo*. His make-up is rendered more terrible or absurd by such things as boars' tusks for teeth and fringes of cassowary feathers for whiskers. A red *baga* fruit represents a sore between his buttocks, and if he is a male he wears very ostentatiously an imitation penis. Altogether his aim is to make himself hideous enough for a real *binei* of the bush, and to behave obscenely and comically enough to make his audience laugh.

2: Williams E.G-5 (1923-1925) 1928

OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

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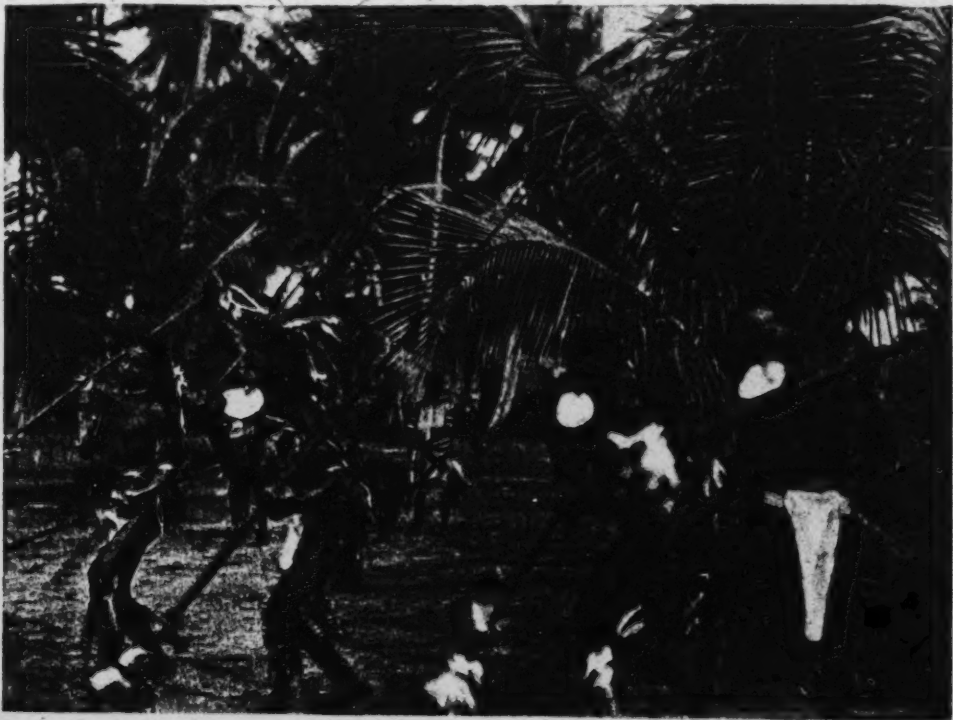


TATIKO, A TARO MAN

See page 49

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

536
292
302
411



DIROGA MEN DANCING

See page 20

[Facing P120]